

COPY OF THE REPORTS (INFORMAL)

MADE BY

MAJOR MACPHERSON, R.E.,

AFTER THE LOCAL INQUIRIES

RELATIVE TO THE

PROVISIONAL SCHEME
OF THE BOUNDARY COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE DIVISION OF THE
COUNTY OF DOWN.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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IRISH BOUNDARY COMMISSION.

Copy of the Reports (informal) after Local Inquiries by Major Macpherson, R.E., with respect to the Provisional Scheme of the Boundary Commissioners for the Division of the County of Down.

The first inquiry in connection with the division of County Down under the Redistribution of Seats Bill was held at Downpatrick at 11 a.m. on the 30th December 1884.

A number of people were present, and great interest appeared to be taken in the proceedings.

I explained to the meeting that a scheme for the division of the borough of Belfast had not yet been prepared by the Commissioners, but that, as it was very improbable that more than 4,000 or 5,000 of the population of County Down would be added to Belfast Borough for Parliamentary representation, the general lines of the scheme for County Down, prepared by the Commissioners, would probably, in any case, remain the same, and that the Commissioners would be glad in the meantime to receive any local information which might be submitted to them.

Mr. Gordon, who appeared for the Conservatives of the county, approved on the whole of the Commissioners' scheme; but suggested that, if part of the population of No. 1 (or Newtonards) district should have to be thrown into the borough of Belfast, then the deficiency thus caused in No. 1 could best be met by throwing from No. 3 district into No. 1 the 1,962 people of the parish of Killinehy.

Mr. Young, solicitor, appeared for Lisburn, which is partly in Antrim county and partly in Down, and which hitherto has had separate representation, but is to be merged in those counties under the Bill.

He asked that the report of the Commissioners should be delayed until the result is known of a memorial from Lisburn which is to be forwarded to the Prime Minister; and urged strongly upon me to receive a statement with a map which had been prepared to show what Lisburn desires, with the view of its population being made up to 15,000, and to its then retaining its separate member. I said that that was a question beyond the scope of the inquiry, and that I believed the consideration of it was beyond the powers of the Commissioners; but if he forwarded a statement to the Commission it would receive due attention.

Mr. Small, M.P., appeared for the Nationalists. At first he declined to state their case, as a second inquiry would have to be held. But after Mr. Gordon had explained the Conservative view he agreed to go on.

His objections to the scheme of the Commissioners were on two principal points.

The first was with reference to the line dividing No. II. Division from No. IV. This line, near the north-west end of it, should run south of the parishes of Annadone and Seapatrick, so as to throw them out of Division No. IV. and into No. II.; while near its south-east end it should run on the north side of the parish of Drumgooland and of that part of the parish of Kilmegan which is in the barony of Upper Iveagh Lower Half, so as to throw them from No. II. into No. IV. This change would give greater equality of population, as No. II. Division would in this case have 59,271 population, and No. IV. would have 59,302. Also it would be more in accordance with the pursuits of the people, as Dromore and Banbridge follow similar manufacturing pursuits and are closely connected with each other; while there is no community of interest between Drumgooland and Kilmegan parishes and the district north of them; in fact, a range of mountains

intervenes. All Seapatrik parish also, in which Banbridge is situated, would be thrown into the same (No. II.) Division.

As to Nos. I. and III. Divisions, he suggested that, as Upper Ards is more connected with the town of Downpatrick than with Newtonards, all the barony of Upper Ards should be placed in the same division as the former town, with the exception of the parish of Ballywalter, that is, in Division No. III.; that the boundary between Nos. I. and III. should thus run from east to west instead of from north to south, crossing Strangford Lough from the north end of Upper Ards to the south end of Castlereagh Lower, and running in a westerly direction so as to cut off the parishes of Knockbreda, Drumbo, part of Drumbeg, part of Blaris, and part of Drumbeg from No. III. and add them to No. I. This would practically amount to an exchange of the greater part of Upper Ards barony for the five parishes or parts of parishes last named; the exchange would give rather too much population to No. I. Division, but this would be set right by the number of people to be probably transferred from No. I. to Belfast borough, while Newtonards and Downpatrick towns would be centrally situated in their respective divisions.

Generally he considered that the dividing lines of the divisions as proposed by the Commissioners were too long; that the divisions were not compact enough; that his proposal to run the dividing lines from east to west instead of from north to south would in both cases give better shaped divisions as concerned Nos. I. and III. and Nos. II. and IV. Also that petty sessional districts would have formed a better foundation for the divisions than baronies.

On this last point I said that the Commissioners must adhere to their instructions, which required baronies to be taken as the basis for dividing counties, and not petty sessional divisions as in England.

Mr. Small said he would be prepared to produce evidence in support of the statements he had made. I said I could not receive *formal* evidence, but that I would consult my colleagues as to whether the statements made at local meetings might be made by way of question and answer, subject to cross-examination by the other side, the examinees being called like witnesses by either side. (This question was afterwards settled in the affirmative by the Commissioners as a matter of form and convenience.)

The discussion which followed took the form of criticism of Mr. Small's proposals, partly against, partly for them.

The Hon. S. Ward, on behalf of Newtonards, took exception to Mr. Small's statement that the barony of Upper Ards had a closer connection with Downpatrick than with Newtonards. To his personal knowledge the contrary was the case already, and in future there would be a light railway from Newtonards to Portaferry, which would bring the two districts into even closer connexion than now.

Mr. Wylie, LL.D., for the Liberals of the county, opposed Mr. Small's proposals. He considered that the scheme of the Commissioners was fairly satisfactory, and carried out their instructions better than would be done by Mr. Small's proposed changes, which would not make the divisions more compact or their dividing lines more regular. That the range of mountains north of Drumgooland parish is a trivial matter compared with those to the north of the barony of Mourne, which cannot be separated from the district north of it; that Mr. Small's proposals would break up baronies, and would make the south boundary of his Division No. I very irregular near Saintfield; that Mr. Gordon's proposal as to Killinchy parish is not approved by his (Dr. Wylie's) side, who would prefer any deficiency caused by a transfer to Belfast borough from No. I Division to be made good from the parish of Knockbreda, close to the borough.

Mr. Gordon, replying to Mr. Small, supports generally Dr. Wylie's statements, and adds that there is no business connexion between Dromore and Banbridge, the former town being purely agricultural while the latter is manufacturing; that, as each district will have a polling place, the argument as to mountains does not carry any weight. As to Mr. Small's proposal for dividing Nos. I. and III. Divisions by a line running from east to west, the fact that they would thus be in part intersected by Lough Strangford is a fatal objection, the ferry at Portaferry being an indifferent one.

Mr. Small said the Commissioners' Boundary between Nos. I. and IV. Divisions would separate Banbridge from Gilford, a place to the north-west of it, both of these places being manufacturing. And, in support of Mr. Small's case,—

Mr. W. McMahon, a native of Banbridge, said that town had a connexion with Dromore, while the *Rev. Thomas O'Donnell*, Parish Priest of Killeel, said that the people of Mourne in his district are intimately connected with Castlewella and ought to be in the same division as Castlewella instead of being attached to Banbridge, with which they have no connexion whatever, the latter being a manufacturing place.

With reference to No. I. or Newtonards District, Mr. McGrath, Poor Law Guardian, of Portaferry, for the Upper Ards District, said that all that part of Upper Ards Barony which is south of the Parish of Ardkeen is more connected with Downpatrick than with Newtonards, and that their feeling is unanimous in favour of being attached to Downpatrick or No. III. Division. He doubts if a light railway will ever be made between Portaferry and Newtonards.

On the other side the *Hon. S. Ward* said he had heard farmers of the district in question swearing before the Land Commission that they were obliged to cart their farm produce to the Newtonards market.

Mr. McCarten, Solicitor, for the Nationalists, said the electors ought to have a central place in each division available for political meetings, and that Mr. Small's proposals would provide this.

The meeting was unanimously in favour of the county name being retained in all the divisions, with the points of the compass added.

The meeting was then adjourned *sine die*.

COUNTY DOWN.

ADJOURNED INQUIRY.

At the adjourned local inquiry held at Downpatrick on the 29th January 1885 the court-house was quite full, and even greater interest than on the previous occasion appeared to be taken in the proceedings.

I explained that since the former meeting the Commissioners had decided to propose a transfer from County Down to Belfast Borough of about 5,000 people, most of whom would come from the Newtownards or No. I. Division. In order to compensate for this transfer, the Commissioners proposed to transfer from No. III. to No. I. Division that part of the Parish of Knockheda which is not to go into Belfast.

Mr. Healy, M.P., appeared for the Nationalist party.

It is unnecessary to state here his proposals and arguments, as they were exactly the same as those brought forward by Mr. Small at the former inquiry. Mr. Healy merely reversed their order.

In support of his schemes for the division of the county, he called as evidence in favour of his proposed dividing line between Nos. I. and III. in Upper Ards Barony (see page 4) the following witnesses:—

Mr. McNabb, J.P. and P.L.G.,

Mr. H. McGrath, P.L.G., Portaferry,

Mr. Knox, Ex-policeman,

who all stated that the people near the south end of Upper Ards Barony have more dealings with Downpatrick than with Newtonards.

Mr. Hewson, J.P. and D.L., a landowner in Upper Ards, stated on the other side that the people of the greater part of that barony deal with Newtownards and not with Downpatrick.

As to the second part of his scheme, namely, to run the dividing line between Nos. II. and IV. Divisions so as to throw Banbridge into No. II. and Castlewella into No. IV. Division (see pages 3 and 4):—

Mr. Healy called as witnesses—

Mr. McMahon, Banbridge, and
Rev. Mr. O'Brien, P.P., Banbridge,

who said Banbridge has no connexion with the south part of County Down, the latter being purely agricultural, while Banbridge is a linen place;

and Rev. Mr. Finnigan, P.P., Drumgooland,
Rev. Mr. Fallons, P.P., Castlewellsan,

Mr. Murray, Castlewellsan,

who said Drumgooland and Castlewellsan have no dealings with Dromore, the town to which they are by the scheme of the Commissioners attached; all their communications are westward to Newry, and not with the north of the county at all.

Mr. Healy then handed in a map shewing roughly his proposals.

And two memorials in favour of them from Portaferry and Banbridge.

Mr. Wylie, LL.D., appeared for the Liberals.

He repeated his former objections to the Nationalist schemes, see page 4; and said the intention of them was to keep religious separate.

Mr. Healy protested against this statement.

Mr. Card, Solicitor for the Conservatives, was satisfied with the Commissioners' scheme as it stood.

Both Dr. Wylie and Mr. Card said they could have brought forward any number of witnesses to contradict the statements of the witnesses called by Mr. Healy, but they thought it quite unnecessary to do so.

Several memorials have been received in favour of the Nationalist proposals; they merely repeat the arguments stated above.

This meeting, like the former one, was unanimously in favour of retaining the county name for all the divisions, with the points of the compass.

With reference to the above proceedings the question for the Commissioners is whether the two alterations proposed by the Nationalist party would effect any improvement in the provisional scheme of the Commissioners.

1. Their first proposal, as stated by Mr. Healy, is to divide the barony of Upper Ards, so as to throw the south part out of No. I. or Newtonards Division into No. III. or Downpatrick Division in exchange for some parishes at the north end of Upper Castlereagh barony, to be thrown out of No. III. into No. I.

No advantage can be claimed for this proposed change on the ground of pursuits. As to compactness the Commissioners' divisions are as compact or more so than the proposed new ones at this point. As to population, any improvement claimed is too slight to be of practical importance, especially as the Commissioners' scheme allows for a probably more rapid increase of population in the division which will contain Belfast. Lastly the proposed change would unnecessarily intersect baronies. Indeed the only argument brought forward in its favour is the somewhat vague statement—not admitted by the other parties—that a certain very limited population near Portaferry has more dealings with Downpatrick than with Newtonards. This is quite insufficient ground for a change.

The provisional scheme of the Commissioners should therefore at this point remain.

2. The second Nationalist proposal is practically to throw Banbridge into a northern or No. II. Division, and Castlewellsan into a southern or No. IV. Division, instead of the reverse, as they are in the Commissioners' Provisional scheme.

The arguments in favour of this change are of a very different character from those in the case of the first proposal.

As to pursuits, without going into minor details such as the existence of some isolated mills at Castlewellsan, it is indisputable that the north part of County Down is more or less manufacturing, and that Banbridge is a centre of the linen trade; while the great bulk of the southern part of the county near Castlewellsan and Mourne is solely agricultural. The only exception, Newry, has separate representation.

Therefore, as to pursuits, Banbridge should be in a northern and Castlewellsan and its district in a southern division.

As to compactness, the map shows at once that Banbridge falls more naturally to a northern, and Castledown to a southern division.

On these grounds, therefore, it would appear that the proposed change at this point would be an improvement upon the Commissioners' provisional scheme. I would, however, recommend that the dividing line between Nos. II. and IV. Divisions should run as laid down on the map, marked as Scheme No. III. This line, while effecting practically the proposed change, will comply better with our instructions than the line proposed by Messrs. Healy and Small, as it follows the barony boundaries, except at one point near the west end. Here, to give equality of population, the parish of Donaghmore has to be thrown into No. IV. Division. Mr. Healy's proposal would cut two baronies, which is unnecessary.

As to compactness and population, the new proposed Divisions Nos. II. and IV. will not be found inferior to those proposed in the provisional scheme of the Commissioners, while otherwise improved.

As to names of the divisions, the following are recommended as most in accordance with the unanimous feeling expressed at the local inquiries :—

No. I.—North Down.

No. II.—North-west Down.

No. III.—Mid Down.

No. IV.—South-west Down.

Mr. White and Mr. Bourke concur in the above report.

(Signed) J. C. MACPHERSON.

